

FOREWORD

This publication is the 36th edition of the National Hurricane Operations Plan (NHOP). It is a compilation of the procedures and agreements reached at the 52d Interdepartmental Hurricane Conference (IHC), which was held in Clearwater Beach, Florida, January 27-30, 1998. Details of the conference can be found in the minutes published by this office.

The IHC is sponsored annually by the Committee for Weather Operations and Services of the Interdepartmental Committee for Meteorological Services and Supporting Research. The goal is to bring together the cognizant Federal agencies to reach agreement on items of mutual interest and concern related to the provision of hurricane/tropical cyclone forecast and warning services.

All of the chapters in this edition have minor updates or changes. The IHC addressed two action items related to reconnaissance and dropwindsonde observation encoding, and Chapter 5, "Aircraft Reconnaissance," and Appendix G were updated to reflect the approved changes. Chapter 7, "Surface Radar Reporting," was also extensively revised to reflect the full deployment of the WSR-88D Doppler radar, and Appendix H was added to describe WSR-88D operations for tropical cyclone events. Substantial changes were also made to Chapter 6, "Satellite Reconnaissance," and Chapter 9, "Marine Weather Broadcasts."

During 1997, tropical cyclone activity in the Atlantic hurricane basin was well below normal-- only seven tropical cyclones formed. Hurricane Danny was one of the three to reach hurricane strength, and while only a category one storm, Danny dropped nearly 40 inches of rain over extreme southern Alabama. In the Eastern Pacific, a near-normal 17 tropical cyclones reached tropical storm strength, and 9 of these reached hurricane strength. Seven hurricanes reached category three (96 knots) or higher on the Saffir/Simpson hurricane scale, and Hurricane Linda reached an unprecedented 160 knots (category five). The Central Pacific experienced nine tropical systems and no hurricanes. In fact, there have been no hurricanes for the last 3 years--the last time this occurred was 1963-65.

While the 1997 season was not as active as some of those in the recent past, the effectiveness of the multiagency storm warning support system has continued to evolve--a tribute to the dedication and cooperation of the military and civilian agencies involved. It is gratifying to see their extensive review and planning efforts blended into the updated National Hurricane Operations Plan, which will guide this critical warning support system during the 1998 hurricane season.



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